

Child Adolescent Arts Expressive Therapy



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Contract

An indirect contract:

Child is sent to therapy by demand

- Child "gets service" (client); parents pay (clients)?!
- Child creates alliance where parents are excluded – inflates child's ego
- Inevitably, parents develop jealousy towards therapist
- Child's attendance is a function of parent's compliance to therapy
- Child is brought (passive) and is expected to be "active" in therapy

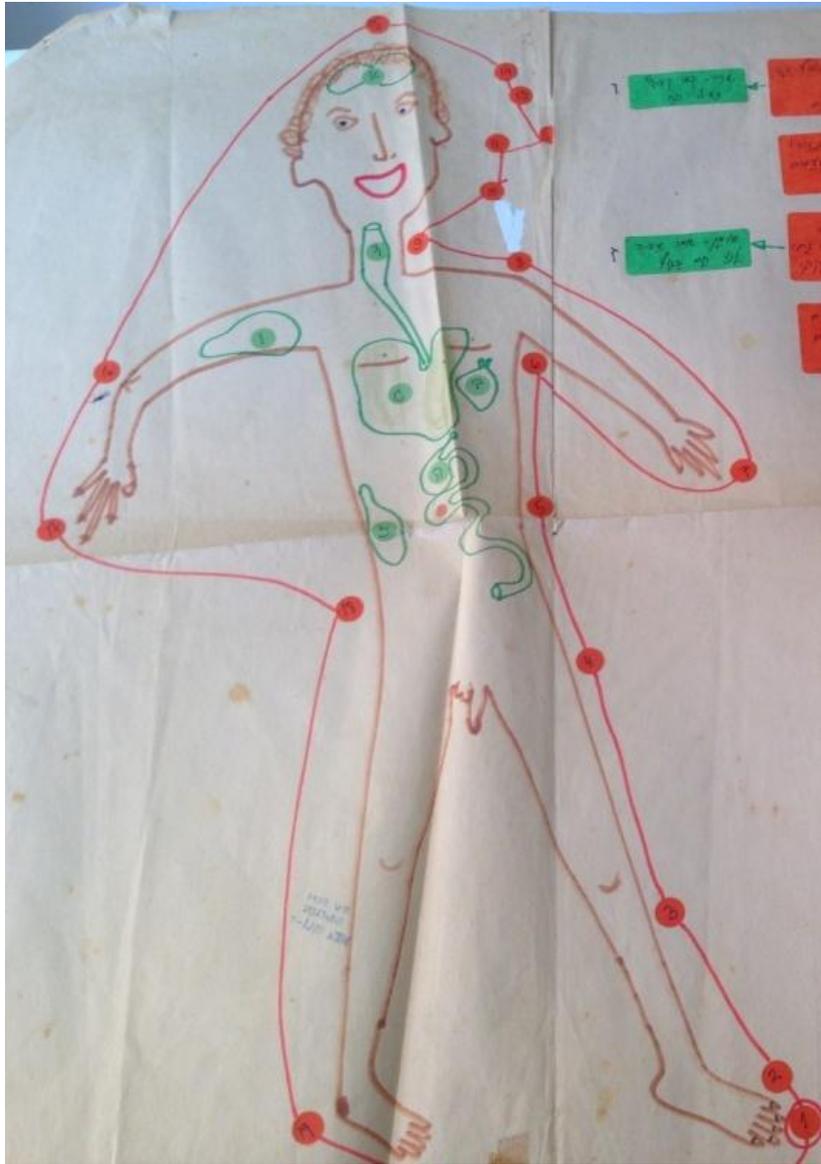
Who is this man or that woman?!

- Not a doctor – but cares about your health
- Not a teacher – but we learn many things here
- Not a parent – but I love you
- Discipline and respect are needed between us

Trust

- Very gradual process- a child will rarely accuse his/her parent
- Trust will be tested on a session by session basis
- As the "art product" is the intermediate agent between child-therapist-parent, art products should be "out of the equation"!
- Be on the child's level
- Show child you hear, see and feel his psyche by becoming his "body team partner": reflecting on, playing with and participating with the creation of the arts.
- Remember to stand still when threatened and facing "destruction"!





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Handwritten notes in green ink, possibly describing the system or the points marked on the diagram.

Boredom

Definition: Boredom is the inability of a child or person to project his/her inner world on external stimulates.

- Preliminary conditions that prevent the normal flow of projection from inner world upon external stimulates are: fear, failure in basic trust, anxiety, and obsessive compulsion, strict education, retardation.

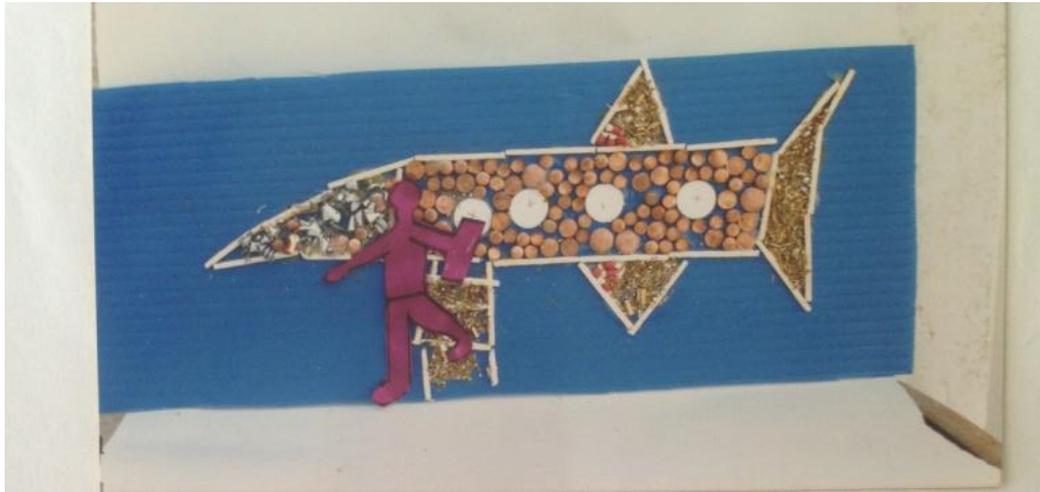
- Upon the ending of the primary process of exploring, coding and registering the therapist studio (between 4-12 sessions), the child will complain of boredom with an attempt to quit therapy.
- Activate boredom, give it form, color, content image and speak directly about its meaning and mechanism. Join the child to fight this monster!
- This is the right time to differentiate the role of the therapist: helper, assistant, guide, teacher, friend, provocateur, guard, trickster.

Process vs. Episodes

- The child experiences arts therapy as a sequence of weekly episodes (e.g. in each session wishes to start a new project).
- It's the therapist's responsibility to create a process.

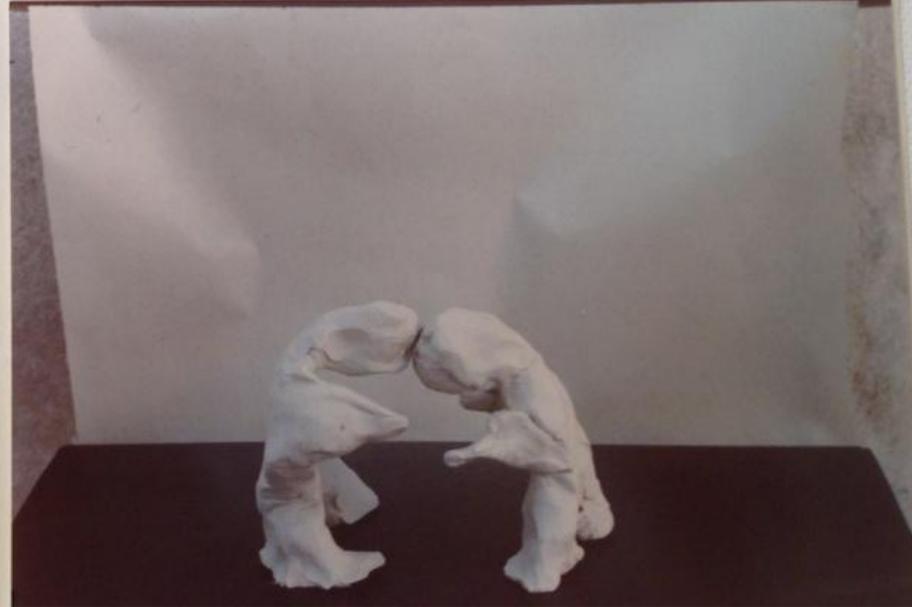








בפגישת הבארת אנו מתמקדים באופנות ההפיכה: בכוח, הייבו קרבפליקט גלוי ולא מתוחכם.



Process

A longitudinal ongoing experience beyond sessions which characterized by the following traits:

- 1) Developed theme
 - 2) Developed learned technical skills
 - 3) Developed emotional expressivities
 - 4) Developed relationship therapist – client – art product
- Preserving the art works in such conditions that will enable continuous artistic activity with them, is one of the therapist's essential roles.

Concrete vs. Symbolization

- Therapy can only occur when concrete specific issues can be experienced on a symbolic level.
- Children are concrete – they hate, they adore, they are disgusted, they are eager, they destroy, they possess, they are attracted, enchanted with the actual object or the actual content. They hardly attribute a meaning to their feeling, wish, need or drive. They don't live with perspective, they are attached to the object, the wish and desire from zero distance!

שני בתוכי נאמר סיכרי: אורג טניו מוטי:
טורק אופר, אוק כיוצא מהיתי לריפוי אום
חברי קבצ אול נשרו לי אום קיבצ
מחסי מריות, ציור הקור והתחבס לעם
לסו מאובן שלטו ירצאו חברי שועם
צוג פנלך אום



טור כפז
קנלר
ומה שר
אומלן
פשוט בתם
אוי, הקובצ

וחברי
המסכים וו
שלוסקים אום בקורחיים
מסבוק: תביה לום תיה
למר אוק עם סיגם לסו
את לביאן הקר

קלות, אום חלום
מסקק וו תקפה
פולחת לר חיה

- Most important job in therapy with children is to shift them from a concrete level- of- experience, up to a symbolic level of experience (sublimation).
- How to shift from concrete into symbolic experience?
- Generalizing
- Coding and labeling, giving a title and naming
- Distancing

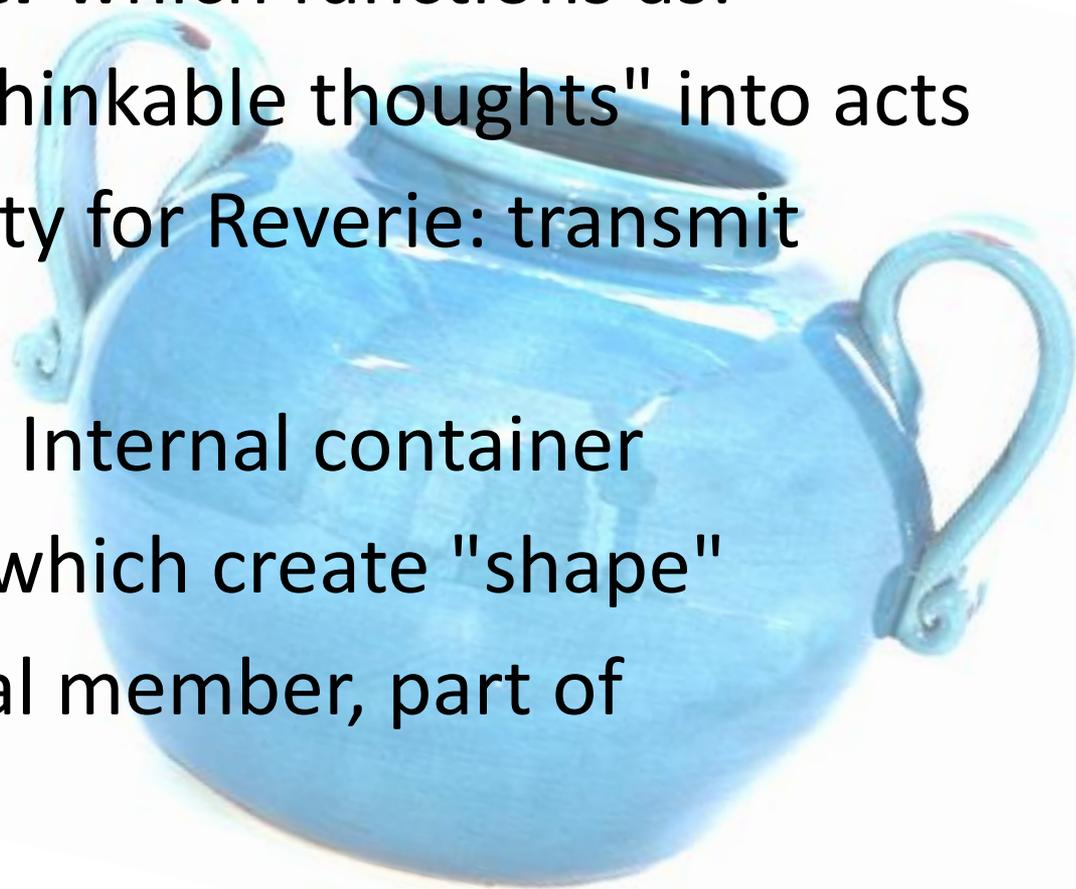
The use of the object, the destruction of the object & relatedness

Most children and adolescents are referred to therapy not because of the reported manifested symptom but rather because of a failure in the developmental process in passing from "using the object" into "relating to the object".

A Maternal Figure according to W. Bion is -

An **Active Container** which functions as:

- 1. Translate "Unthinkable thoughts" into acts
- 2. Provide capacity for Reverie: transmit optimism
- 3. Help create an Internal container
- 4. Give "Words" which create "shape"
- 5. Train as a social member, part of "Establishment"



Most important: try not to allow the "object" (including yourself) to be destroyed!

- 1) In expressive arts therapy much emphasis has to be put on the client's approach, attitude and respect towards the "artistic product".
- 2) Take note as to how the client perceives the **therapist's role in the session: a partner? A servant? An object to annoy or harass?**
- 3) Notice what type of relational attitude is projected by the client on the objects in his stories, sculptures, paintings and songs. Try to intervene by the attempt to shift from use of the object into relating to the object.

True Self vs. False Self

- Donald Winnicott and Alice Miller teach us about the True & False Selves.
- Paradoxically it is the False Self which helps us assimilate, cope and comply to life.
- It takes a long while for a child to reduce the artistic production of the "False Self" in therapy and start producing "True Self Artistic Productions".

- Dirty work, mass, aggressive and violent art, sexually perverted symbols, chaos – are all demonstrations of archaic true selves and should be received in child adolescent art therapy with respect and containment. In addition, immoral contents, severe punishments, sadistic acts should be received as primary true self gestures.
- After a period of incubation the child will produce authentic benign true self art productions.
- Artistic language is a derivative of culture and style – take care not to impose artistic style on your child or adolescent client – authentic art heeds psychodynamic contents

Bring the story to the 'Here and Now'

Children who trust the therapist bring stories, events, episodes and complaints to the therapeutic interaction. Try as much as possible to build, create, and dramatize this material through arts in the Here and Now domain. A child's psychic repertoire should be displayed in the studio through sculptures, drawings, story in continuation, caricatures, mobiles, therapeutic games, invented songs , short dramatic theatrical scenes etc.

Elaborate on feelings : verbalize feelings and express them in plastic art

- Usually when people are asked what **they feel** (in response to an event) they tend to say what they **think about it**: "it was great... or it was terrible...".
- This is because expression of feelings require an **emotional intelligence** which derives from
 - 1) **An ability to evaluate from distance**
 - 2) **Code the evaluation into one sole word**
- It is the therapist job to teach the child and adolescent to decipher feelings.
- The ability to code an emotional involvement into a feeling enables the client to have an arbitrary position towards the event and grants the client a freedom of choice!











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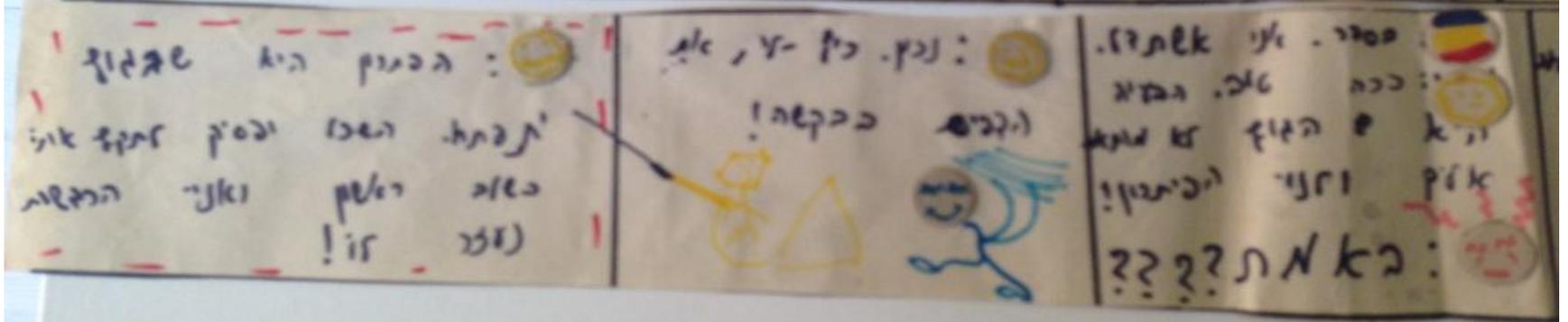
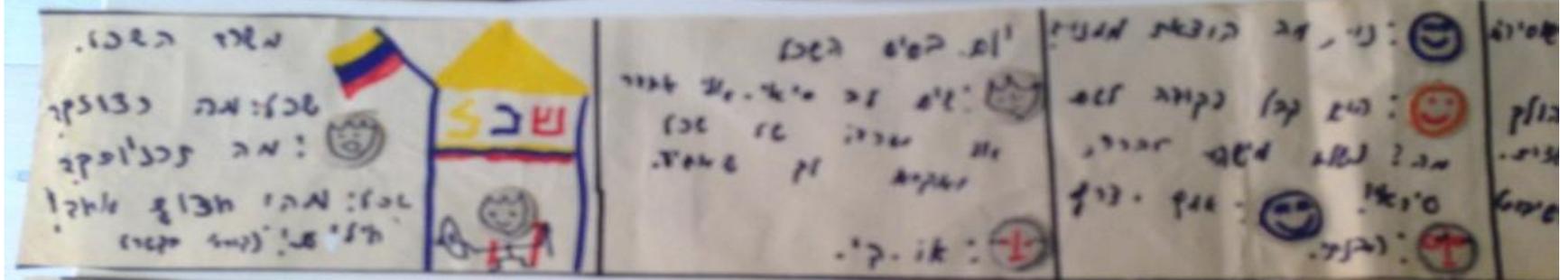
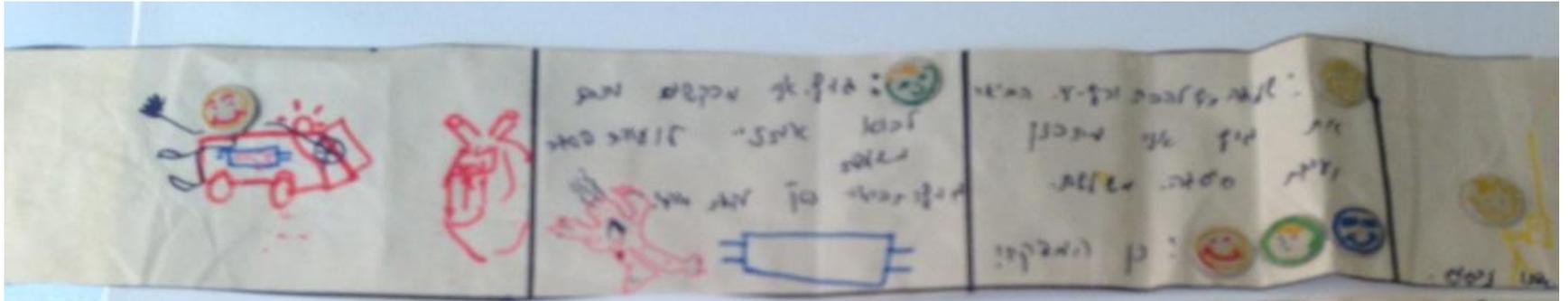
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Translate child to the parent

Soon after therapy started with a child or adolescent, the therapist will inevitably be trapped : The parents who have sent the child to therapy and pay for it, would be shown through the child's comments and reports as "potential clients" themselves. Usually parents prefer to send their children instead of entering into therapy themselves.

Therefore –

- It is the therapist's job to translate the child to the parent!
- With the permission of your client, you may carefully use artistic works to demonstrate the child's position in family or life obstacles. You may challenge parents themselves to experience art therapy as a way to elaborate issues, dilemmas and problems.







שלב ג': רועי כותב שיר:

בית-זה כשיש לי בסיס משלי
וגבולות משלי ששומרים עלי פנימה
בית זה כשאני לעצמי נותן חום
ביסחון ופיבוק
בית זה כשדרך החלון אני יכול להציץ ולשמוע
אך לא מתערב
בית זה כשמבעד לדלתי יכנס אלי רק מי
שאני רוצה
והכי חשוב זה כשאני יכול תמיד
לצאת מביתי לכל הרפתקאה ותמיד
לדעת שבכל רגע אני לביתי חוזר בקלות.

Adolescent – on the edge – the risky erotic alliance

For an adolescent an option to create confidential, hermetic, intimate alliance with an adult therapist is almost a suicidal experience. Known as a "peer group freak" at this age – most adolescents arrive to art therapy with tremendous suspicion both because the therapist is an adult (associated with teachers, parents and family) but also because creating art in the presence of an adult is on the edge of embarrassment.

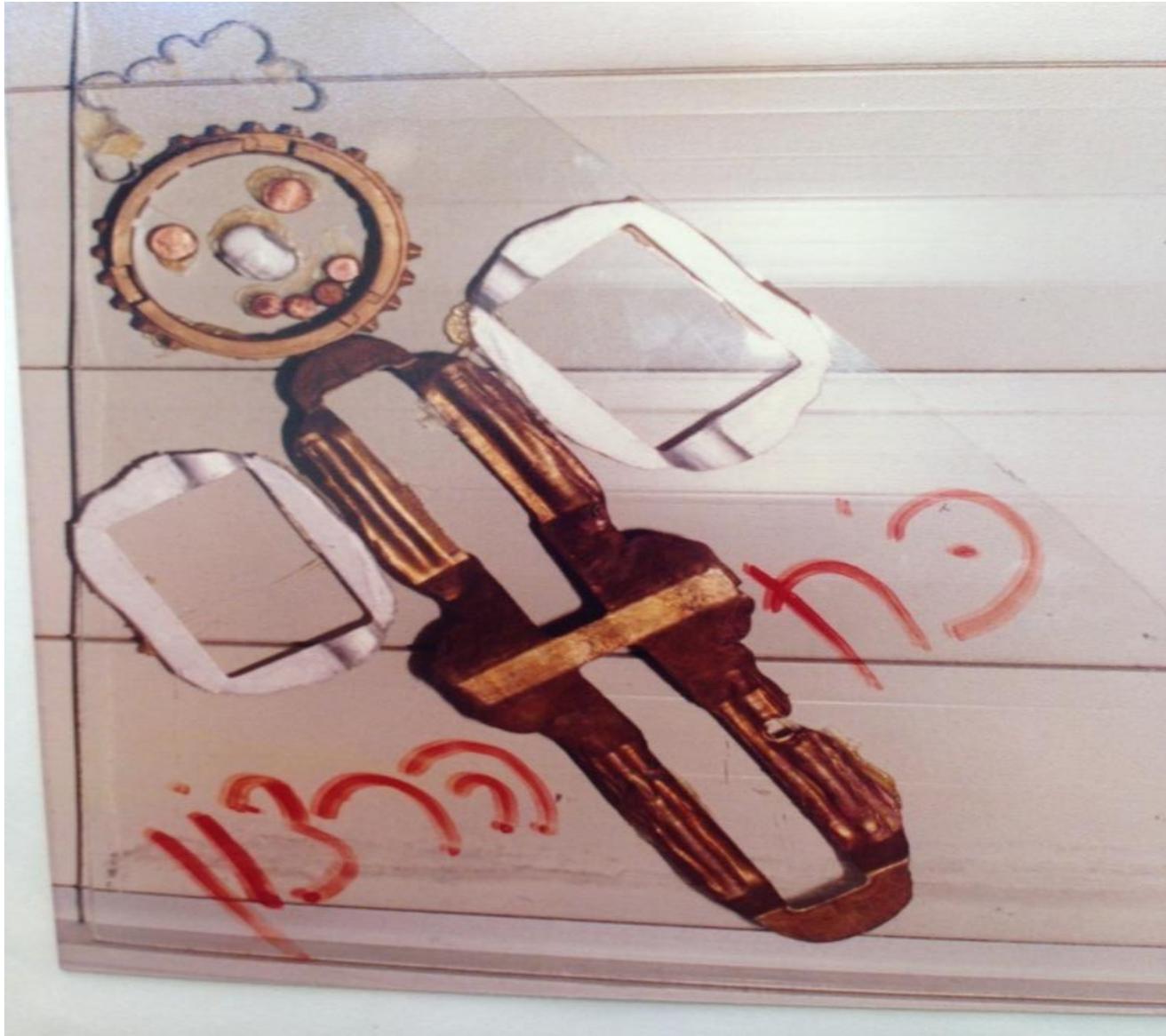
Here are some hints how not to fall into the trap:

1. Work with the young person, do not stand aside observing
2. Stick to frankness, directness and transparency
3. Use humor and break formal boundaries
4. Share your professional knowledge; do not pretend to be "Dr. Knows All"
5. Respect even partial or miserable art products



















Me- you and the art between us- A psychodynamic triangular space

- In art therapy, your client's therapeutic experience dwells in the framework of a triangular psychodynamic space with the three poles of a) **client** b) **client's art work** c) **therapist**
- **For further understanding the significant meaning of this fact, go for further reading in my articles:**
- ***Diagnostic Thinking in Expressive Arts Therapy***
- ***The Rehabilitation of the Self in Expressive Arts Therapy***
- ***The Creation Axis***

A triangular artistic psychodynamic space means that in the art therapy session there are several options for interventions:

- 1) Client creates art and the process itself is a healing process (see *The Creation Axis*)
- 2) Me -Thou Gestalt 'Here and Now' dialogue: Client talks to the artistic production and the artistic production answers (Here a complete dramatic process can take place)
- 3) The Therapist relates to the art object as an autonomous entity and elaborates the client's response to the therapist - art dialogue

Collection – Protection- Investment

Gradually, a collection of artworks is produced in the therapy, which calls for a therapeutic consideration:
Whether to keep them?

How to guard them?

- Should the art product be given away for the client to take home, expose it? Hide it? Destroy it? Give it a name? Create an archive? Once therapy is finished, should art products be kept as photographs, destroyed?
- **There are no conclusive answers to these questions; however keeping them in mind can direct you to the appropriate decision.**

Here is a flow chart showing art therapy becoming a therapeutic process:

